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RHMFIUU/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA PRIORITY
INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 6866
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USTR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION Q US-JAPAN BEEF TRADE AGREEMENT
- TOKYO

LEAD STORIES: Thursday morning's Nihon Keizai Shimbun front-paged press remarks Wednesday in Vienna by President Bush that China has an important role to play in restraining North Korea from test-firing a long-range ballistic missile believed to be a Taepodong-2.

¶1. "Wiping Away Distrust of US Beef" An editorial in the business daily Nihon Keizai commented (6/22): "The USG and GOJ agreed Wednesday on conditions for resuming beef trade, opening the way for Japan to begin importing US beef as early as late July. While some in the US voiced dissatisfaction with how long it took to reach the agreement, there has been criticism in Japan that this is a political resolution of the issue ahead of the June 29 Bush-Koizumi summit in Washington. For the time being, though, the issue has been resolved.... We hope that the USG will inform meat plants certified to export to Japan of the agreed-on conditions and keep a close watch on whether they implement them. Another violation would deepen distrust among Japanese consumers, leaving the US unable to fulfill its goal of expanding beef exports to Japan....

¶2. "Regardless of whatever steps the US takes, violations could still occur due to carelessness. The USG has not provided any guarantee that there will never be another violation. Rather, it has called on the GOJ not to impose a blanket ban but to limit punitive measures to specific meat plants if they violate the trade conditions following Japan's resumption of beef imports. While clarifying what will happen in the event of a violation is a good idea, ironclad rules are not appropriate. If something happens that calls into question the entire system of risk management, the GOJ should halt all

imports and call on the USG to take measures to improve it, as the most important concern is ensuring food safety for the Japanese people."

¶3. "US Beef: Distrust Remains" The liberal Asahi editorialized (6/22): "The USG and GOJ agreed Wednesday on Japan's resumption of US beef imports. GOJ inspectors will audit US slaughterhouses and approve them to export to Japan. Japanese officials will also accompany US inspectors on unannounced audits. The two sides agreed on these conditions to deliver safe beef to Japanese consumers. The US livestock industry is very powerful, and it has continued to apply pressure to get the market reopened in Japan, which is the largest importer of US beef.

¶4. "The concerns of Japanese consumers, however, have not been wiped away. Many voiced distrust at the recent town-hall meetings held across Japan on the safety of US beef. Numerous retailers and restaurant operators have declared that they will neither sell nor use US beef even after a resumption. We recognize that experts from both countries, each with its own unique situation regarding beef, discussed the matter in a cool-headed manner. It cannot be denied, though, that the two countries gave priority to reaching a political settlement ahead of the June 29 Bush-Koizumi summit in Washington and upcoming WTO trade negotiations.... It is imperative for the GOJ to fully disclose the outcome of its audits of US meat plants. It must also disclose the results of quarantine inspections, which have been strengthened."

SCHIEFFER